



**NORFOLK ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
12TH NILA HANSARD – 19 AUGUST 2009**

**CEREMONIAL SITTING
to mark thirty years of internal self government
and the inauguration of the Legislative Assembly**

**SEREMOENYEL SETEN
F' maak therti yias ' internl self gauwment en d'
Staat ' dieh Lejeslietew 'Semble**

SPEAKER Honourable Members, please be seated. We await the arrival of His Honour the Administrator

PRAYER

REV ROD OLDFIELD Let us pray. Almighty God, creator and ruler of all, in your infinite wisdom you appointed the rulers of the nations of the world. We give thanks for those you have appointed to guide and lead us. Especially we give thanks today for the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly. We give you thanks for those who have served this community in this office over the past thirty years. For what has been achieved and the contributions made by many. Remembering also those who are no longer with us today. We pray for those who serve in office today and into the future. Grant to all who serve in public life, wisdom and skill, imagination and energy. Protect them from corruption and the temptation of self-serving. Direct their work and influence their decisions to the advancement of Your Glory and to the safety and welfare of all on this Island so that peace and happiness, truth and justice, may be established amongst us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

I invite you all to join in the Legislative Assembly prayer

Almighty God we humbly beseech Thee to vouchsafe Thy blessing upon this House, direct and prosper our deliberations to the advancement of Thy glory and the true welfare of the people of Norfolk Island, Amen

SPEAKER Thank you Reverend Oldfield. Honourable Members and guests please be seated. Your Honour, Honourable Members and Mr Buffett and other distinguished guests. Today, the 19th of August 2009, this House is marking the 30th Anniversary of the Inaugural Sitting of the Legislative Assembly of Norfolk Island and 30 years progression towards full internal self-government in Norfolk Island. To mark the occasion we have invited distinguished guests to be present with us and of course it is a great shame that at this time, due to adverse weather conditions Her Excellency the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, and her party have been unable to land in Norfolk Island this afternoon and of course are hoping to return tomorrow. On that basis this ceremonial sitting will go ahead and His Honour the Administrator has kindly agreed to perform the Vice Regal role in the absence of Her Excellency. The Norfolk Story, told by narrative song and dance will now take place on Thursday at Rawson Hall commencing at 3pm. But I wish to continue Honourable Members. We welcome His Honour the Administrator, Mr Owen Walsh and we equally welcome Mrs Walsh, Norfolk Island's very own "First Lady" who accompanies and

supports him in his duties. We are very honoured to receive our guest speaker and Island Elder Mr David Buffett AM on the floor of the House today and I take this opportunity to acknowledge in the visitor gallery Mr Bill Blucher and Mr Greg Quintal MBE who along with Mr Buffett and myself were among the members of the Norfolk Island Council who successfully negotiated internal self-government with the Commonwealth of Australia which culminated with the passage of the Norfolk Island Act in 1979. Mr Buffett was a member of the Legislative Assembly from its inaugural sitting on 10 August 1979 through to and including the Eleventh Assembly, a period of 28 years and during that time served as President and Chief Minister, Speaker and in various additional ministerial roles. The Hon R.J. Ellicott QC has sent his congratulations and his best wishes and has asked that I read his message. Mr Ellicott was the Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs 1977 to 1981, but more than that, he was the architect of the model of self-government, which we in Norfolk Island have today. Mr Ellicott's message dated 18 August 2009 reads – "I regret very much that we are unable to join you to celebrate the first 30 years of self government for Norfolk Island. All those who have contributed to its success are to be congratulated. I believe it is vital to the future of the Island, the preservation of its Pitcairn culture and traditions and its freedom, independence and economic well being as an Island community that it remain a self governing territory within the Australian Commonwealth. "May you be vigilant to nurture, protect and fulfil your right to self government as you have in the past 30 years. "Colleen and I both send our best wishes. Signed by Bob Ellicott Minister for Home Affairs 1977 – 1981." I have also received a letter from His Honour the Administrator conveying to the Assembly a message from the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Brendon O'Connor MP, which I will now read: "I congratulate all past and present members of the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly for their individual and collective contributions to Norfolk Island as it is today. They are all part of the colourful tapestry that is Norfolk Island's history - and future. In particular, I congratulate the current Assembly, which is dealing with another period of significant change for Norfolk Island. "Norfolk Island has a great history - a history of change and adaptability to change. Each change has brought challenges and opportunities. Nowhere is this more evident than in the changes that occurred when the Australian Parliament granted Norfolk Island self-government in 1979. "Like any milestone, the 30th anniversary of self-government provides an opportunity to look forward as well as back – to learn from the past to make the future better. Like the rest of Australia, Norfolk Island faces serious difficulties and challenges. We can all expect that there will be further changes - some of those changes may be difficult. "At the inaugural meeting of the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly in 1979, the then Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Bob Ellicott QC, emphasised that Norfolk Island is an honoured part of the Australian nation and community and shares fully in our common national life and destiny. I share this view. "I assure the Legislative Assembly and the Norfolk Island community that the Australian Government is fully committed to working with you to ensure Norfolk Island's long-term sustainability. "I regret that the sitting of the Parliament has prevented me from joining you in person on this historic occasion. I hope you enjoy the commemorations and send my best wishes for an enjoyable celebration." Honourable Members, it was my privilege last week to attend on your behalf the birthday celebrations of the Quota Club of Norfolk Island, which was founded in the same week as the first sitting of the Legislative Assembly in 1979. The Quota Club has provided outstanding service to the community ever since. To mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Legislative Assembly, the Quota Club has generously presented a magnificent embroidered Norfolk Island flag for use in the Chamber, where you can see it proudly displayed for the first time today. On behalf of all Members, I express our sincere thanks to the dedicated and hard-working members of the Quota Club for this wonderful gesture. Honourable Members and other distinguished guests; every anniversary, which celebrates internal self-government in Norfolk Island is a significant achievement for our Island and its people. We, Members of the Island's parliament are delighted to honour the occasion with this ceremonial sitting and so to our guests this afternoon I warmly welcome you all. I would now like to call on His Honour the Administrator to read the address that would have been presented to us this afternoon by Her Excellency

THE ADMINISTRATOR Thank you Mr Speaker. Her Excellency the Governor-General has asked me to read the message that she would have much preferred to deliver in person on this important historic occasion. Her Excellency's message is as follows: I am delighted to have the opportunity to visit Norfolk Island to commemorate 30 years of self-government. I thank you for the opportunity to address this special sitting of the Legislative Assembly. Norfolk Island has a rich history, chequered in hope and despair, beauty and ugliness. I am speaking to you today in a building deeply ingrained with the lessons of the past and with the promise of the future. The stark contrasts of Norfolk Island provide such an opportunity for us. A chance to learn about ourselves, each other. A chance to work together to secure a future for the people of Norfolk Island – to ensure the lessons from history are not forgotten. I congratulate all past and present members of the Legislative Assembly. Each member of the Assembly has contributed their own time and effort in the interests of the Norfolk Island community. Your generosity is as important a reason for the 30th anniversary celebrations as the passage of the enabling legislation. Today, I also remember the loss of Ivens (Toon) Buffet who was killed while in office in 2004. I honour his memory and contribution to Norfolk Island. As Governor-General, I have had the opportunity to travel to many communities throughout Australia. I have spoken with the people who are responsible for those communities. I can see that every day, members of the Assembly must deal with the issues that are facing the community here. You, as policy makers, live side by side with the people affected by your policies. What a valuable opportunity that is, for you and the people you represent. It means that you can be held to account immediately for the decisions that you make. You are not buffered by living elsewhere in a different community. The decision that you make today will be raised with you tomorrow. Being part of a system with such direct representation has its own demands on you. It means that you must daily demonstrate the courage to make the right decisions. Not the decisions that will please your neighbour or the people you see in the supermarket. You must make the decisions that will benefit the community and future of Norfolk Island. I am reminded of address made to the first Assembly by the Hon Bob Ellicott QC in 1979. Mr Ellicott said: *As individuals, be prepared to abandon your own pet theories; adopt as your test what appears to be reasonable in the interests of all the people.* This is sage advice indeed. Mr Ellicott also asked the Assembly to focus on decision-making by consensus. I realise that decision-making by consensus brings a certain burden. Those who speak must express their ideas clearly and honestly Those who listen must do so openly. Alternatives and opportunities must be raised and considered. Consensus decision-making may take time. It may raise issues that are difficult or confronting. However, at the end of those discussions, there can be certainty. Certainty that dialogue has been open. Certainty that the best interests of the Norfolk Island community have been explored. I commend these ideals to you, as a central aspect of your self-government system. I am sure that you will agree that these ideals should be protected and valued. Norfolk Island has much to be protected and valued. The Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area will be assessed as part of Australia's nomination of convict sites to the World Heritage List. I am excited that KAVHA has been included in the nomination. Our capacity to demonstrate our care for our heritage and environment will be showcased. It is an opportunity for many Australians to understand the important role Norfolk Island has played in Australia's settlement and development. Norfolk Island's small first European settlement was crucial to the survival of its sister settlement at Sydney Cove. I hope that KAVHA's nomination will encourage many to visit Norfolk Island. Visitors will gain a better understanding of the many challenges faced by early settlers, on Norfolk Island. KAVHA's nomination also acknowledges a significant, dark time in Australia's convict history. We should not forget the ordeals experienced by the people sent here. Neither should we forget that KAVHA is the place where the Pitcairn Islanders found their new home. I can only imagine the mixed feelings of the Pitcairners on leaving their Island home. I can certainly imagine their delight in seeing this beautiful landscape five weeks later. The heritage, language and culture brought by the Pitcairners has been woven into the rich fabric of Norfolk Island life. It contributes to the Norfolk Island that we enjoy today. What a change is

represented here - from the misery of a penal colony to the opportunities for a new life. This building represents a point of balance between Norfolk Island's past and its future. The Assembly that uses it forms the heart of the Norfolk Island Government and community. Norfolk Island faces some significant challenges. It needs to be focused on, treasured and developed. I am struck by the words of Emily Dickinson "*I held a jewel in my fingers, And went to sleep, The day was warm, and winds were prosy; I said: " 'T will keep." I woke and chid my honest fingers, -- The gem was gone; And now an amethyst remembrance Is all I own.*" Let us not risk the jewel that Norfolk Island represents. I invite you all to use this 30th Anniversary as a time to contemplate not only where Norfolk Island has come from. It is a time to look to the future, to ensure that Norfolk Island's gift is available to the generations that follow us. I congratulate Norfolk Island for 30 years of self-government and I look forward to meeting the people of Norfolk Island at the community celebration. Hopefully tomorrow. Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen

SPEAKER

Thank you Your Honour for your address this afternoon on behalf of Her Excellency. I now invite the Chief Minister, the Hon Andre Nobbs to respond.

MR NOBBS

Thank you Mr Speaker. I am immensely proud to be speaking on behalf of the Norfolk Island Government and for the Norfolk Island community at this commemorative occasion. We were still indeed honoured at this celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly by the presence of the Administrator and his wife Mrs Walsh and I thank him for presenting the Governor-General's statement to us. Particularly in recognising some of the elements of Her statement whereby the recognition of connectivity between the elected Members and the community and that consensus decision making and also interestingly enough the Emily Dickson quote which related to a jewel in the fingers as I believe Norfolk is a jewel in the crown. We also have in the chamber a number of other distinguished guests, and we thank you all for joining us here in our celebrations. Many of you have played a very significant part in the constitutional history of Norfolk Island - indeed many of you continue to make very much valued contributions - and it is our great pleasure that you have been able to join us today. Back in 1979, there were those in Norfolk Island and elsewhere who said that self-government would be only a passing phase and that before long Norfolk Island would simply be absorbed into a Commonwealth electorate, "normalised" as a tiny and almost indistinguishable part of the broad Australian community. Far from that happening, we are here today as testament to the success of the model of self-government established by an Act of the Australian Parliament 30 years ago, and since then nurtured and developed by the diligent work of the members of twelve Assemblies elected by the people of this Island. Our self-government institutions continue to evolve, marrying Westminster parliamentary processes with the unique cultural and community traditions of Norfolk Island. Three referendums held since the granting of self-government have made it quite clear that Norfolk Islanders do not simply wish to be absorbed into the Commonwealth, but instead to continue to determine their own future. On each of those three occasions, over 80% of those voting expressed such a view. The preamble to the *Norfolk Island Act* of 1979 gives a quite comprehensive summary of the historical events leading up to Norfolk Island self-government, including the arrival of the Pitcairn settlers in 1856, the creation of Norfolk Island as a "distinct and separate Settlement" until 1914, when it became "a territory under the authority of the Commonwealth." The preamble goes on to specifically recognise that "...the residents of Norfolk Island include descendants of the settlers from Pitcairn Island" and "the special relationship of (those) descendants with Norfolk Island and their desire to preserve their traditions and culture." Consequently, the preamble affirms that "...the Parliament considers it to be desirable and to be the wish of the people of Norfolk Island that Norfolk Island achieve, over a period of time, internal self-government as a Territory under the authority of the Commonwealth and, to that end, to provide, among other things, for the establishment of a representative Legislative Assembly and of other separate political and administrative institutions on Norfolk Island." Mr Speaker, successive Assemblies have made enormous strides in advancing

internal self-government, through establishing a robust institutional framework and providing for a vast range of community and essential services for all who live here. I acknowledge the great foresight and hard work of the many elected members over the past thirty years, all supported by the diligence of Assembly staff and public sector workers. During the past 30 years of self-government, there have been a great many achievements, of which I shall mention just a few, since I know that other speakers will be providing a more detailed chronicle of those and because I wish rather to look briefly at our present status and as well to consider what lies ahead. I am here today as Chief Minister of the Twelfth Assembly, respectful of those councils, governments and Assemblies that have come before this grand anniversary. Each of those elected groups and individuals have charted Norfolk Island's course through tumultuous and diverse times. They have not only risen to those challenges, the Norfolk Island we share today is testament to the fact that we are a positive anomaly, the jewel in the crown when it comes to self governing territories that are challenged by remoteness and scale of population, yet still provide 21st Century social services and programmes for health, education and welfare. We have successfully established a wide range of services and programmes tailored for the special needs and characteristics of Norfolk Island – such as our self-funding workers compensation and medical insurance schemes. We have also created and continue to operate a wide range of public business enterprises which combine commercial principles with the meeting of community needs – such as Norfolk Air, Norfolk Energy and Norfolk Telecom. These businesses operate in a manner to ensure that we meet our overall social policy goals, whilst still bringing state of the art technologies to all in our community. This is not to say that we have achieved all of our aspirations - the community and the Assembly of the day continually set lofty goals that reflect our ambition to see our home prosper, our environment protected, our technical capacity improved, and fair, equitable and high quality services provided to everyone in our community. Working largely on our own resources with revenues raised locally, we have progressed a long way in the past 30 years toward achieving these goals. Not so many months ago I watched in admiration as President Obama initially addressed the people of the United States of America and through supportive dialogue, helped those listening to understand that “yes they could” overcome the many challenges facing them at that point in time. Norfolk Island's issues are unlike those facing President Obama's America, yet in perspective we are a complex if small society with the challenges of remoteness, a small population and limited financial capabilities, facing the same unlimited aspirations, initiatives and commitment to a sustainable future. It is in that context that I say in Norfolk Island's case – yes we can, yes we have and yes we will, use our best endeavours to ensure Norfolk Island's ongoing economic strength, environmental sustainability and strong community and cultural values. Our thirty years of self-governance have been at times challenging, eventful and satisfying. Norfolk Island is a remote Island in the Pacific with strong family and cultural ties to Pitcairn, United Kingdom and Tahiti, as well as to our closer neighbours New Zealand, New Caledonia and Australia. The many tasks placed before the government of this Island reflect not only the respect of cultural heritage, but also the multicultural and contemporary expectations of a first world community. We must be able to react appropriately and in a suitable time frame to the needs and aspirations of this community. We have shown for thirty years that we can do just that – and with a mutually respectful and supportive relationship with the Commonwealth of Australia, I am confident that we will continue to enhance our internal self-government and to grow as a successful and prosperous community. We believe that we are the success story among the small self-governing communities of the South Pacific, and look forward to many more years of self-government and to good relations with all of our neighbours, large and small. Your Honour, thank you once again for presenting Her Excellency the Governor-General's statement to us, and for sharing in this thirty-year celebration of Norfolk Island's achievement. Thank you, Mr Speaker

SPEAKER

Thank you Chief Minister. I now invite Island Elder, Mr David Buffett AM to address the Legislative Assembly. Mr Buffett

MR DAVID BUFFETT

Mr Speaker, Your Honour and Mrs Walsh, Chief Minister and Ministers, Honourable Members, and Distinguished Guests in the Gallery with us this afternoon. Mr Speaker, Who would have thought that those 28 souls who ventured to hide away on Pitcairn's Island in January 1790, to commence the making of a new people, would create a community to arrive at this destination – the occasion we celebrate today. From the very beginning the odds were severely against their survival. Within a few short years of sailing into Bounty Bay, 14 of the 15 males had either been killed or died. The Polynesian women alone survived in any significant number. Yet the male dominated writers of history fail to make the essential recognition that they, and they alone, possessed and exercised the life skills on an isolated island for that small group to survive. They suffered many difficulties and no doubt were the subject of some of their own inadequacies, but note Mr Speaker, that their breeding capacity was clearly unimpaired – they multiplied! And despite their extreme isolation, the Christian faith was revealed to them. Eventually there were too many to remain self-sufficient on small and isolated Pitcairn Island. Their move here to Norfolk Island was not their first migration. March 1831 saw the entire community resettled in Tahiti, which proved to be another test of survival. Of their then 87 people, seventeen were to die of illness contracted whilst in Tahiti. Almost 20% of their population was lost. The migration was not a success and within six months they were back home on Pitcairn Island. Diminished numerically and demoralised. Who would have thought that they could and would survive such adversity. But, survive they did! Their 1856 move to Norfolk Island – ie, a century and a half ago – was not a straight forward event either. Whilst the need to move became increasingly pressing, they were reluctant to again sail to the unknown. They did however decide this very clearly – we will all go or none of us will go. We will continue to be a people together. We know of course, they did move. Numbering now 194. An historic placement. The first of two momentous events which shaped more than any other, the further development of the Pitcairn and Norfolk Island people. The second was World War II, but that's a recitation for another day. To the Pitcairn people, Norfolk Island was a "bounteous bestowal" to quote Captain Denham of HMS Herald. The migration here brought benefits beyond: Self sufficiency in a larger and fertile place; Superior dwellings; Public buildings; Grants of land; Continuity of their self government. The move also delivered: Better educational opportunities for their children; Eventually qualified medical facilities for their community; Closer proximity to trading vessels, and the opportunities this brought. Yet challenges abounded in their new home. Unexpected challenges to their understood proprietorship of the Island, this experienced immediately upon their arrival; Loss of self government in 1896; Evictions from Kingston occupancies in 1908; Booms and busts in their various primary industries: whaling, bananas, lemon seed, passionfruit, bean seed export, to provide some examples. Amongst all these challenges, who would have thought they could have summoned the capacity to deliver two firsts in the British sphere of influence: Compulsory education, and Voting rights for women. We, isolated and so called ill-educated, were in some key matters not so far removed in civilised concepts and conduct, as may have been thought. The years of 20th century, saw the people, now of this place: through federation of the states of Australia; The First World War years; The Depression; Second World War period; a variety of governmental systems, all post 1898, of a colonial nature; and the century allowed us to witness the present principal industry of tourism, which has progressively brought unprecedented success and financial stability over a period of more than 50 years. I've laboured the work of our forebears, and the heritage they have provided. I make no apology for this Mr Speaker. Without such a heritage, we would be but another distant place, albeit over water - out of say Sydney, or Brisbane, or Auckland. Having stressed the heritage point, I want to inject this essential factor. Our heritage has been enriched, over the generations, by people who have elected to join us, and we have accepted them. Those who have successfully joined us, are those who have come to us for what we are – not for what others would want to make us. We should not underestimate the value of their contribution: social, environmental, professional, and especially in the sphere of commerce, which has led us beyond the original subsistence agricultural existence. Today those who are of the heritage I have described, comprise about half of Norfolk Island's permanent population - 47.9%. The other half are - of Australian origin

(the larger percentage); of New Zealand origin; of United Kingdom origin; of Plus a small group from other places. We are now a cosmopolitan lot. THE DESTINATION. August of 1979 brings us reasonably close to where we are today. Resulting from a 1976 Royal Commission, and of absolute importance the depth of understanding of the Norfolk Island people, by the Australian Minister of Government who then held Commonwealth responsibility for Norfolk Island, R. J. Elliott QC, and intense negotiation on the part of the 9th and last Norfolk Island Council, this place and it's people had restored to them, a remarkable degree of self government. Erection of a parliament – this Legislative Assembly. Unprecedented powers to make laws and to have executive oversight of government, initially over some 42 heads of powers, specified by Schedule to the Norfolk Island Act 1979. Importantly these powers included public moneys and the raising of revenue. How have we managed our affairs since 1979? What have we done? I have a basic list of facilities or services, erected during this 30 year period. As a prelude, I note that you've gathered in today's gallery, some who have played a major role in securing these benefits, and I warmly acknowledge and thank them. The indicative list -

- Statutory Social Service benefits (no longer the discretionary “hand out” system)
- The security of a Healthcare scheme
- Upgraded international telecommunications and Television services
- Employment and minimum wage safeguards
- A Remuneration Tribunal
- Sewerage system serving Burnt Pine built up area and high density Middlegate and school areas
- Standards in Tourist Accommodation to safeguard the island's principal industry
- Extension of the Island's education system to include Years 11 and 12
- Legal Aid Scheme
- Counselling services
- Range of quite sophisticated Land Management and Development Planning provisions
- An Airline
- Retail Price Index and attendant statistical collections
- Revision of the Island's Taxation regime and introduction of a Goods and Services Tax, to better support our community needs
- Creation of a National Park and Botanical Garden and arrangements for their management (with Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service)
- Rehabilitation of Philip Island
- The 42 Scheduled powers increased to 93.

Much of it has been done in consultation with instrumentalities of the Government of Australia. That does not necessarily imply funding by the Australian Government. This list is not inclusive of everything that has happened, and yet it remains modestly impressive. The overriding factor is that this spectrum has been covered because we have the capacity to make such decisions on our own account, for our own wellbeing. Notwithstanding this impressive list, I'm unconvinced we have any rights to offer self congratulations, unless, we accord proper acknowledgement that these advancements are in fact the exercise of a responsibility, expected to be exercised if we are to honour the will to survive against all odds, by our forebears. Our predecessors: Who: suffered deprivation, disease, starvation and even death. Who: experienced migration failures, evictions. Those who battled for educational advancement, a new home, a better home – this that we have today. Who: in all their adversity, as well as their times of success. Retained themselves as a people. All of this is not to be wasted, or frittered away. Time and again we hear and say, we want to do things so our successors (meaning mainly our kids, the children) will be better off. Our forebears lived that talk. Put simply – now it's our turn – and the present generation has delivered those things exemplified on “the list”. Self-government is of course, not yet fully advanced. Nor is it yet secure against being dismantled. We suffer attacks upon it from time to time, and will continue to experience this until we master a mechanism to protect it. Or a mechanism to ensure, if it is to be changed, it is at the will of those it governs. That's quite a challenge! But our

forebears rose to meet such challenges, and with the leadership of those elected to this Assembly - So can we. I had some additional words to say in the presence of the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. It's now quite appropriate for me to say all of those now, except to say that when she arrives tomorrow, if the weather permits, that I am sure the people will make her welcome and I certainly hope that it's worth the journey. Two journey's maybe. Mr Speaker it has been an honour to be invited to address the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly and I thank you for such an honour to do so on this celebratory occasions. Thank you

SPEAKER Thank you Mr Buffett. A most moving address. I humbly thank you once again. I now invite the Minister for the Environment, Education and Social Welfare, the Hon Vicky Jack to speak. Mrs Jack

MRS JACK Thank you Mr Speaker. Your Honour the Administrator, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Today, Mr Speaker, I propose to commemorate 30 years of internal self-government in Norfolk Island by paying tribute to women who have made a meaningful contribution to this community through their active participation in the political arena. History records these women as: the late Mrs Kit Donkin nee Nobbs who was the first woman elected to the Norfolk Island Council in the early 1900s; Ms Alice Buffett OAM, a member of the first, second, third and fifth Legislative Assemblies, and a government minister in the third; Mrs Brenda Reed, Deputy President and government minister in the third Assembly; Mrs Gaye Evans JP, a member of the fourth Assembly and government minister in the fifth; Mrs Helen Sampson, member of the seventh Assembly; Ms Nadia Lozzi-Cuthbertson OAM, a government minister in the seventh Assembly; Mrs Monica Anderson, Deputy Speaker in the seventh Assembly; Ms Chloe Nicholas, member of the second Assembly and Deputy Speaker in the tenth, and myself, a member of the tenth Assembly and government minister in the eleventh and present Assembly. Mr Speaker, the role of women in politics in this Island's history would not be complete without mentioning Pitcairn Island from whom a substantial number of the female population on Norfolk today trace their ancestry. In this regard I turn to former member and Minister of our Legislative Assembly, Mrs Gaye Evans JP, who sits today in this Chamber as the Deputy Clerk of our Parliament. In April 1994 Mrs Evans contributed an article in *The Parliamentarian* titled *"Equality for Women – Sharing a society, sharing the responsibilities"*. All here would recognise this publication as that produced quarterly by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association of which Norfolk Island is a member Branch and I quote from Mrs Evans' article: *"Historically, Norfolk Island has played a significant role in parliamentary precedent. Pitcairn Islanders, from whom the people of Norfolk Island are descended, gave women the vote in 1838. It was the first English speaking country to do so and, incidentally, it was also the first to make education compulsory. By comparison, the Married Women's Property Act was not repealed in Australia until 1928. Up to that time women were mere chattels. Under that English law, infants, lunatics and married women were bracketed together so the Pitcairn settlement showed tremendous initiative, far in advance of the rest of the world, in recognizing that women were capable of exercising their right to vote and that all children were worthy of educating...."* Mr Speaker, in acknowledging the role of our women in the political arena I would like to pay tribute to the body of women in the Commonwealth known as the CWPG or Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Group. As a member of the Twelfth Assembly and of the Norfolk Island Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I attended the 2007 annual meeting of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Group held in New Delhi India in conjunction with the annual CPA conference. Mrs Gaye Evans was a founding member of the CWP, which had its inaugural gathering in Barbados at the 1989 annual CPA Conference. I wish to record the valuable work that the CWPG plays today in enhancing recognition of women and the meaningful role they can play in the evolution of parliamentary democracy. It was my attendance at the CWPG gathering in New Delhi that encouraged me to continue with the Women's Forum on Norfolk Island, a Forum that I had put in place earlier that year. It was encouraging that through the empowerment of Island women that management of

that forum moved out of the political arena into community ownership. So Mr Speaker in summing up my contribution today I would like again to reflect back on the words I quoted at the anniversary sitting held in this chamber back in 2004 when we celebrated 25 years of internal self-government. These words themselves were taken from the speech made by the Hon Bob Ellicott QC MP, Minister for Home Affairs, at the inaugural sitting of this Legislative Assembly on 10 August 1979: "The Commonwealth Parliament and the Australian Government and people fully recognize and appreciate the special features of Norfolk Island, its people, its history, its culture and its association with the Pitcairn tradition". Mr Speaker, in closing I would like to repeat words in my speech at the 25th anniversary commemorative sitting in 2004. "As we continue to move forward into the next thirty years of internal self-government may we as a community be ever mindful of the need to keep our uniqueness, celebrate it and encourage it, for in this day of blurred edges, of catering to and for the masses, it becomes more important than ever to keep our identity as a community intact, of who we are and where we are going at the front of our thinking and not to be normalized out of existence." Thank you Mr Speaker.

SPEAKER

Thank you Mrs Jack. Honourable Members that concludes our ceremonial activities for this afternoon and Distinguished Guests, we wish that you will again join us at Rawson Hall tomorrow afternoon at 3.15pm for our community welcome where it is hoped, God Willing of course, that Their Excellencies will be present and so on that note Honourable Members I say that this House is now adjourned until Wednesday 26th August 2009 at 10 o'clock in the morning

